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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 000465

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [KNNP](#) [QA](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR U/S ROBERT JOSEPH'S VISIT TO DOHA

Classified By: Ambassador Chase Untermeyer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Embassy Doha is pleased to welcome you. You will find the Qatari foreign minister, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani (HBJ), will be interested to meet you to further the nascent Strategic Dialogue put forth by Counselor Zelikow during his visit March 20-21. HBJ will be particularly interested in discussing Iran. He met with Ahmedi-Nejad in Tehran on January 23, where he gave the message that Qatar would not break ranks with other UN Security Council members on the nuclear issue. The Iranian Foreign Minister visited Doha on March 22. HBJ expressed complete agreement with Counselor Zelikow on the dangers Iran poses to the region. HBJ is familiar with some of the non-proliferation agreements you might raise; you should inquire when Qatar might ratify these agreements. Generally, he has indicated that an improved climate for the bilateral relationship is the key. Qatar is an invaluable ally for our military efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan; on a wider range of issues, Qatar has staked a more independent path. It views its new seat on the UN Security Council with the optic of responsibility toward a range of developing world and Arab "clients."

¶2. (U) The First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani (addressed as Your Excellency or Mr. Minister), is the key decision-maker on the issues you plan to raise. In consultation with you, we will also request meetings with the Heir Apparent, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and the Chief of Staff of the Qatar Armed Forces, Maj Gen Hamad bin Ali al-Attiyah. We would also like to organize a media event, with either Al Jazeera or local and regional newspapers. The paragraphs that follow provide further background on key issues of interest.

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Article 98  
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¶3. (C) A/S Rademaker raised signing an Article 98 Agreement with the Assistant Minister for Follow-Up Affairs, Mohamed al-Rumaihy, during his visit in January. Rumaihy said that the matter is primarily handled on the military side and that the GOQ is reviewing the matter. When A/S Bloomfield met with HBJ in October 2004, the FM made clear that he would sign an agreement right after the U.S. declares Qatar a Major Non-NATO Ally. Qatar is already a much bigger ally than some countries that already have this designation; it would be worth probing DOD colleagues to determine current views on this issue as it pertains to Qatar.

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PSI  
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¶4. (C) Also with al-Rumaihy, A/S Rademaker urged Qatar to endorse the Statement of Interdiction Principles. Rumaihy said that at the time Qatar last considered PSI, there were no Arab states signed on. He requested a list of Arab and Asian supporters of PSI, which the Embassy subsequently

provided. The Qataris have voiced no other objections to the initiative; you may be able to make progress on this here.

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Chemical Weapons Convention  
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15. (C) From October 2004 through October 2005, the Qatari MFA was unresponsive to requests to discuss challenge inspections. Qatari authorities balked at meeting a CWC Challenge Inspections negotiating team from Washington last December, and a meeting request on this issue has been pending for over a month. If you have time to bring this issue up with the minister, we will be able to determine whether the problems are bureaucratic in nature or whether the Qataris are holding back for tactical reasons.

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Iran  
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16. (U) Traditional Qatari regional diplomacy seeks to keep lines open to all neighbors. Foreign Minister Manoucher Mokatti met the Amir in Doha on March 22; at a press opportunity, he defended Iran's right to pursue nuclear weapons and said the U.S. position does not have the support of the majority in the UN Security Council. HBJ met the Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmedi-Nejad, delivering a verbal message from the Qatari Amir, on Tehran January 23. Qatari official press reported that HBJ described, in a press conference, Qatari-Iranian relations as "good in the gas and oil sectors, especially in terms of the South Pars Field." (Note. This is the Iranian name for what Qataris call the North Field, the largest single gas field in the world and

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shared by the two countries.) He said the two countries' gas agreement was a model for building "brotherly" relations.

17. (C) In their meeting March 20, HBJ agreed strongly with Dr. Zelikow's analysis of Iran's revolutionary motivations and goals, noting Iran's active support for subversive elements in Bahrain, Kuwait, Yemen, and eastern Saudi Arabia. HBJ added that while the Iranian public does not support the regime's foreign policy goals writ large, the U.S. should not underestimate the degree of domestic support for the nuclear program based on a nationalistic agenda.

18. (S) HBJ said the GCC is ready to come forward and coordinate on regional security. Qatar is working with neighbors, and meetings are happening that are not reported publicly. He believes that five GCC countries can get together at the ministerial level, including military representatives. Following these initial internal discussions, the group would meet with a U.S. representative, possibly at HBJ's London residence, and possibly within the next month.

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Iraq  
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19. (S) Qatar has been a pillar of support for our efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. We continue, for instance, to fly unimpeded combat missions out of Al-Udeid Air Base. The Amir shares our view that restoration of order and a successful democratic transition are of paramount importance not only to Iraq but to the region. However, there is some feeling that Qatar's efforts over the past two years are not fully appreciated in Washington. The Foreign Minister has promised the Ambassador recently that the GOQ would provide debt relief to Iraq "at the right time." While the Foreign Minister has expressed concerns of civil war in Iraq, he has stated publicly that the coalition needs to stay in the country to establish wider security. The GOQ also points to the importance of establishing a power structure in Baghdad

that is fully inclusive of the Sunni bloc.

¶10. (C) Qatar has evaluated creating a \$5 billion bank to invest in - rather than grant money to - Iraq's industries, such as oil, gas, and agriculture. The GOQ had commissioned a study with the Bahrainis and Citibank; the Iraqi financial expert who has charge of the proposal, Nemir Kirdar of Investcorp, will be in New York shortly, and HBJ proposed that he travel to Washington to brief U.S. officials on the idea.

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Al-Jazeera  
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¶11. (S) In his recent visit, Counselor Zelikow said that he had not traveled to Doha to discuss Al Jazeera and that the U.S. was ready to "turn the page" on the tenor of the relationship. Al Jazeera "creates an environment of legitimacy for terrorists and appears to lend credibility to their international call for attacks on US homeland and US interests in the Middle East," according to the DIA. However, the monitoring agency does not allege that Al Jazeera directly jeopardizes Americans. In response to our repeated protests and appeals, Al-Jazeera's management claims to have reduced the air time given to Al-Qaida and kidnappers' videos and have made efforts to address the inflammatory nature of its reporting from Iraq. In February, Al Jazeera's negative coverage of the U.S. in Iraq, as measured by DIA, stood at 13%. The channel has stressed to us its coverage of pro-democracy movements in Lebanon and Egypt as well as broader coverage of Middle Eastern politics. The Al Jazeera managing director told the Ambassador, "If the Americans want to find a proper partner in its effort to get democracy and reform, they won't find a better one than Al Jazeera."

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Political Reform  
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¶12. (U) Qatar's own program of reform, launched by the Amir after he assumed power in 1995, took a significant step forward last June when its first constitution came into force. The constitution calls for a two-thirds elected national legislature. These elections have not been scheduled but are expected to take place sometime in early 2007. Qatari women will have the right to vote and will be encouraged by the government to run for office. In municipal elections in 1999 and 2003, women here were the first in the Gulf region to cast votes, and one woman was elected to the council.

UNTERMEYER